



**Testimony to the Appropriations Committee in Support of a separate line item and full funding for After School Grants in the Department of Education Budget**

February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017

Submitted by Mark Fopeano, Program Manager, Dwight Hall at Yale

Chairs of the Appropriations Committee (Senator Osten, Senator Formica, and Representative Walker) and members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Mark Fopeano. I work for Dwight Hall at Yale, the Center for Public Service and Social Justice on Yale University's campus. A major portion of my position oversees after school programs in New Haven, and I am here this evening to urge you to restore After School Grants as a separate line item in the Department of Education Budget, and to fully fund programming in this year's budget.

Last year, I represented the state of Connecticut as an Afterschool Ambassador with the Afterschool Alliance, a national network of afterschool professionals who work to enrich the lives of students. No matter where I went and no matter where I looked, after school programming is important for three reasons: it keeps kids safe, inspires lifelong learning, and helps working families.

Since 2010, my organization has been lucky enough to receive funding from the state of Connecticut. The result has been Co-Op After School, a program that offers safe space for up to 400 high school students every year. Our after school model give students options, and attracts school teachers, outside artists, and Yale students/affiliates as instructors.

A major measure of success in our program, and any other high school program in the state, is the number of students that attend programming for more than 30 days in an academic year. For the past six years we have averaged 92 high school students, per year, that have voluntarily chosen to stay after school for at least six weeks out of their year. To this point we have 59 students that have met that mark, which represents a 34% increase over this point last year. Every year, our program serves more students and more students have a quality experience.

The reason for our programs success is why it is so important to continue funding; we are uniquely able to support the individual, from academic help to artistic expression to identity-discovery. More than half the school chooses to take part in after school programming, and students even tell us that the reason they come to school at all is to take part in after school programming.

Of course, we are not able to achieve these numbers without reliable funding in place. I urge the committee to fully fund After School programming as a separate line item in the Department of Education budget.



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Below my signature you will find quotes from students, who in their own words, will tell you the importance of having the opportunity to stay after school.

Thank you,

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Words from our students, parents, and instructors:

“Co-Op After School gives me the so many opportunities to try different things. I also get to explore outside of my art and it’s something I look forward to.”

Zshekinah Collier, student, grade 12

“I instruct a small creative writing group that meets once a week. I love working with my student and engaging their creativity. More importantly, I love being able to encourage my students to look at their worlds (school/home) in a different way! they should feel entitled to want better for themselves; dreams are limitless.”

Jezrie Marcano-Courtney, community instructor

“I normally can’t go outside my house with my friends after school, so I get to spend extra time outside of my house and get to make new friends.”

Natalie Rosario, student, grade 11

“I really like my CAS programs because they teach me all sorts of great things. And they taught me to accept myself for who I am.”

“My freshman year I started CAS and didn’t really know anyone, but I had some friend. After a few weeks I got used to it and made more friends. It was really fun.”

Khalid Payne, student, grade 10

“I am a freshman here and I joined two CAS programs, Peer Leadership and Children’s Theatre. I am having the time of my life. I made new friends and met amazing people.”

Keith Schmidt, student, grade 9

“CAS is a great program because I feel as though I am able to express myself throughout whatever I am doing. It always allows me to be myself.”

Jisonna Madison, student, grade 10

“I love being able to do community service after school because I like helping people.”

Candye Brown, student, grade 12

“CAS is a chance for me to meet people I haven’t met before in school. I also get to develop skills to help me outside of school or in school. I also have a chance to take programs to enhance my skills for the future.”

Veronica Robinson, student, grade 11

“I love CAS because it helps me with my life. Peer Leadership is a program I am in where I share out how I am feeling or if I have an issue that I need to speak out, I know I can always talk to someone there.”

Anonymous student



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"My daughter is a ninth-grade student at Co-Op High in New Haven. She attends CAS twice a week. This program gives my child something to do after school that she really enjoys. She is learning new crafts while gaining knowledge. CAS is a great program. I'm happy that we are a part of this experience because her last school did not have any after school programs. Thank you."

Tamika Walker, parent of a 11th grader

"CAS is the best thing to happen to me. I am so glad Co-Op has this for us as students so we can be together as artists and not just as students."

Jillian Valeta, student, grade 11

"CAS has given my daughters the opportunity to explore other avenues of study, arts and community that otherwise would not be afforded to them. Opportunities today equal options tomorrow. Please continue to fund and support CAS!!!

Diana Gonzalez-Valeta, parent of a 9th and 11th grader

"As a CAS instructor, I love being able to spend time with students outside a standard classroom setting. CAS is a great way to connect with students on a different level, than just their teacher."

Zach Chernak, instructor

"CAS has always been there for me even when I had nothing to do and no one to talk to. It really helped with my self-esteem in a great way. I'm a better person now."

Kayla Cromety, student, grade 11